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We are in the midst of an election campaign in which two men seek the office of United States Senator. They have in common the fact that both have seen service on the national scene. And there the resemblance ends. As a New Yorker who served as the second highest official in our Defense Department during one of the most critical times in America's history, I would like to comment tonight on the respective contributions of these two candidates as I saw them from my vantage point in the Pentagon.

One of the candidates, Mr. Keating, has tried to portray himself as a modern Paul Revere, a military prophet, with mysterious sources of information, as a man who alerted the Nation to the Cuban missile crisis because he -- and he alone -- was in possession of the facts.

The other candidate, former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, happens to be the man who, perhaps more than any other single individual except President Kennedy himself, was actually responsible for getting Russian missiles out of Cuba.

The one - Mr. Keating - presented wild rumor with the reckless abandon that increasingly characterizes the Republican Party of 1964. The other, Robert Kennedy, spoke little, but acted with determination to remove the Russian missiles from Cuba without destroying civilization. As one who participated in every decision made by our Government during that crisis, I assure you

that the conduct of Robert Kennedy and Mr. Keating during those weeks was a classic study in responsibility versus irresponsibility in public life.

In the fall of 1962, according to Mr. Keating, President Kennedy at the White House did not know what was going on. Mr. McCone at the Central Intelligence Agency did not know what was going on. Secretary Rusk and Under Secretary Ball at the Department of State did not know what was going on. Secretary McNamara and I at the Department of Defense did not know what was going on. Only Senator Keating knew because -- according to Senator Keating -- only he had the facts.

Assuming all of this to be true -- and I say assume because I can tell you, of my own knowledge, that it was not true -- what does a responsible citizen do when he finds himself in such an incredible situation? A responsible citizen, I submit, marshalls his evidence and takes that evidence to those officials of our Government charged with defending this country from attack. Senator Keating, however, refused to take his frightening information to the President. He refused to take it to the Central Intelligence Agency. He refused to take it to the Department of State or the Department of Defense. He took it to the floor of the Congress and to the television screen. He did this with information which, if true, raised horrendous prospects for the entire civilized world.

We do not know why Mr. Keating refused to give the responsible officials of the Government his information or the sources of his information. Perhaps the reason was that he knew, as we knew, that in August and September when he was making his reckless statements, there were no offensive missiles in Cuba. This, our photography clearly demonstrated. And with our photographic surveillance, we caught the Russian missiles as they were going into Cuba and as they were going into their sites. Within days after that we amassed the necessary power to force the Soviet communists to retreat and to remove all the offensive weapons from Cuba.

During this same period, Attorney General Kennedy was going energetically, relentlessly -- and silently -- about the business of ascertaining the true situation 90 miles off our shores and preparing to take whatever action was necessary. The Attorney General was, as you know, President John F. Kennedy's closest, most trusted adviser, throughout his Administration. As a fellow member of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, which had the primary mission of collecting the facts and making the decisions affecting Cuba, I can tell you that Robert F. Kennedy had more to do with the outcome of that crisis than anyone else in Washington. It was his firm insistence upon getting all the facts before taking action, his demand that all alternatives be examined and thought through before selecting a course of action, which enabled President Kennedy to bring this Nation safely through the shadow of nuclear catastrophe.

The early stages of the Russian build-up in Cuba cried out for watchfulness and caution. By no stretch of the imagination was there any excuse for irresponsible public statements before our intelligence agencies, our military leaders, and our President, were able to reach conclusions about the significance of the events taking place in Cuba. Russian offensive missiles were introduced into Cuba at a time when the two most powerful nations in history faced each other across an array of nuclear missiles capable of killing upwards of three hundred million people in a war of less than 60 minutes' duration. The attempt to introduce offensive missiles into Cuba was the result of a grave miscalculation on the part of the Soviet Union. A corresponding blunder on our own part would almost certainly have carried us past the point of no return on the road to Armageddon.

No one understood this danger more than Robert Kennedy. And no one appeared to understand it less than Mr. Keating.

It is true that in 1962, as now, an election was in progress. It is true that Senator Goldwater, Senator Keating and others were insistent that Cuba be made the overriding issue of that Congressional campaign. I do not believe, however, that Mr. Keating would have sought political advantage from so perilous a situation had he truly understood the danger. I suggest that, unlike Robert Kennedy who -

as the President's chief advisor -- carried much of the responsibility for taking action, Mr. Keating did not understand the nature of the crisis - nor do I think he understands it now.

Situated at the Command Center of the Government, Attorney General Kennedy was grimly aware that there were other missiles in the world already zeroed in on targets in the United States, just as our missiles were zeroed in on Soviet Russia. All of us who faced the prospect of making what could so easily have become a fatal decision for mankind, were conscious in those days of one overwhelming truth. We knew that while the United States was then, as it is now, vastly superior to the Soviet Union in strategic nuclear weapons, the USSR was nevertheless capable of inflicting enormous destruction on the North American continent. We realized that the leaders in the Kremlin, having taken a calculated risk, were watching most carefully for indications of our probable response.

In September and October 1962, moment by moment, we were approaching that instant in time when the leaders of the Soviet Union would be confronted with the true extent of their miscalculation. The critical question was how they would react when it became clear to them that the United States intended to prevent the introduction of offensive ballistic missiles into this hemisphere, at whatever cost.

It was at this time that Senator Keating chose to raise his voice in strident demands for precipitous action. Not, mind you, in the security of the Pentagon, or the privacy of the White House, but on the floor of the Congress, on television, and in the newspapers.

The critical requirement during the Cuban confrontation was to make two facts simultaneously clear to the leaders of the Soviet Union. They had to understand our firm determination not to tolerate long-range missiles in Cuba. They had to understand with equal clarity our intention to accomplish that objective by non-nuclear means, if it was humanly possible to do so; our desire to use nuclear means only as a last resort. The Attorney General, or anyone else in a responsible decision-making capacity at the time, could have made this critical requirement known to Senator Keating had he given us the opportunity. But he did not.

In contrast, none of the President's advisers saw more clearly than the Attorney General that the problem of Cuba was not merely to greet force with force, but to send from Washington to Moscow signals so clear, so unequivocal in their import, as to permit no possible misinterpretation. We are probably here tonight only because President Kennedy and his closest advisers succeeded in sending those signals.

What Senator Keating apparently still does not understand is the importance of America's non-nuclear, conventional forces in solving the Cuban missile crisis. By the time Khrushchev agreed to withdraw the missiles, he was faced by the largest U.S. invasion force assembled since World War II. We were prepared to go into Cuba and remove the missiles ourselves, and the Kremlin knew it.

During those weeks of crisis, no one saw more clearly than Robert Kennedy that the time for public announcement would come only when we were ready to act -- when our ships were deployed to enforce an effective quarantine, when our troops were on station, when our aircraft were ready to transport them, when our forces throughout the world were ready for any eventuality. When the moment did come on October 22, President Kennedy went before the American people and the world and apprised them of the true situation. Within days, the Soviets began withdrawing their missiles.

Throughout the entire grim, dramatic episode, Mr. Keating's contribution was a Greek chorus of obstinate confusion. That is still his role.

Kenneth Keating's contribution to the Cuban crisis was to carry on a running public debate with the Government of his country. His ears were deaf to all pleas for greater responsibility, even those of the President himself. The result, inevitably, was to compromise our national security.

Senator Keating continued to cast doubts on the situation in Cuba for months after the last offensive missiles were removed. On January 31, 1963, for example, he said:

"There is continuing, absolutely confirmed and undeniable evidence that the Soviets are maintaining and guarding the medium-range sites they previously constructed in Cuba. There has been no Soviet move to dismantle these concrete sites or withdraw the launching bases, as one might expect if the Soviets intended in good faith to keep their missiles out of Cuba in the future."

The continued repetition of these and equally unfounded allegations finally compelled President Kennedy to direct the Secretary of Defense to make a full television disclosure of the facts. Moments before that broadcast, Mr. Keating saw fit to hold a press conference in which he insisted that "Hard top and gravel sites for the 1,000 mile medium-range missiles were still intact." If Secretary of Defense McNamara could prove him wrong, Keating vowed, "I'll eat my hat on the steps right in front of the Senate Office building."

As many of you saw, Secretary McNamara and the Defense Department intelligence staff then proceeded to show the whole world the photographic proof of what happened in Cuba. We saw detailed photographs of the missile sites before, during, and after the crisis. We saw equipment no larger than an Army jeep. We saw, in clear detail, the destroyed launch sites -- earth bulldozed bare, and broken chunks of concrete. And still Mr. Keating professed to be unconvinced.

Secretary McNamara went even further. He gave Senator Keating the photographs and offered him the services of an expert, military intelligence photo-interpreter. Mr. Keating rejected the offer. Maybe he was trying to save his hat. Apparently he needs it to talk through.

At this point, President Kennedy could only say:

"I don't know what more we can do. Mr. McNamara went to a great length. As he pointed out, he exposed a good deal of information, and also he went further than under ordinary conditions we would have liked to have gone in telling our story. . . if anybody has any information in regard to the presence of any military force or weapons on the island of Cuba, I think they should make it available to General Carroll, who is in charge of intelligence for the Department of Defense. . ."

No such information was ever forthcoming from Mr. Keating -- despite this request of the President -- and despite the repeated requests of the Secretary of Defense and other top officials of the Government. He appears to have sources he trusts more than the President of his own country and the Executive Branch of his own Government. But he refuses to tell anyone who they are.

If that is responsibility, I hope I never live to witness irresponsibility in high office.

It affords a sorry contrast to the conduct of the other candidate for the United States Senate in this campaign. Robert F. Kennedy who, as I have said, probably contributed more than any man alive to getting Russian missiles out of Cuba, has remained almost as silent on the subject since those events as he was during the crisis. The responsibility of Robert Kennedy contrasts with the braggadocio of Kenneth Keating as sharply today, as two years ago the decisive actions of Attorney General Kennedy contrasted with the ill-considered, dangerous speeches of Senator Keating.

As one who lived through the Cuban crisis, hour by hour, week after suspenseful week, I would like to say this about the two candidates for United States Senator in this campaign. One

of the candidates took responsible steps to get rid of the nuclear weapons which could have destroyed the whole Eastern part of the United States. One of the candidates deserves our lasting gratitude for the successful outcome. One of these candidates was the most influential advisor to President Kennedy and the key top government official in every major crisis and program of the Kennedy Administration. And his name is Robert F. Kennedy.